

Flooding

Advice for travellers affected by flooding during their trip

Key messages

- **If travelling to areas affected or likely to be affected by flooding be prepared, check FCDO and local authority advice and follow their guidance.**
- **Individuals with pre-existing health conditions should seek health advice prior to travel.**
- **In the event of flooding, monitor local media, exercise caution and follow evacuation orders.**
- **In the event of flooding, stay out of floodwaters and do not attempt to drive through a flood.**

Overview

Floods can cause widespread devastation, resulting in loss of life and damage to personal property and critical public health infrastructure, such as sanitation and access to safe drinking water [1]. There may be a greater risk of water-borne and vector-borne diseases and infections in flooded areas [2] and any humanitarian response can be delayed due to difficult access to areas due to flooding [1].

Between 1998-2017, floods affected more than 2 billion people worldwide. People who live in floodplains or non-resistant buildings, or lack warning systems and awareness of flooding hazard, are most vulnerable to floods [1], in recent times for example [Australia](#) and [Pakistan](#).

Before travel

Before travelling to areas prone to flooding, check local reports and follow the advice of the local authorities, including respecting any exclusion zones. For general information and for advice relating to natural disasters and safety and security, follow advice from the [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(FCDO\)](#).

We recommend you take time to [prepare for safe and healthy travel](#):

- Speak to a health professional ideally 4-6 weeks before you go about your travel plans and measures you can take to reduce your risk of travel related accidents and illness.
- Ensure that you have adequate [travel insurance](#) appropriate for your trip.
- Check that you are up to date with all vaccinations in the [routine UK immunisation schedule](#).
- Consider other vaccination recommendations for travel to the country to which you are travelling and any reported outbreaks, using the NaTHNaC [Country Information pages](#).
- Check the NaTHNaC [Country Information pages](#) provide advice about diseases and other risks, including malaria and vector-borne diseases. Regular updates are also available in the [Latest News](#) section on our website.

During travel

Monitor local media, exercise caution and follow the advice of the local authorities, including any evacuation orders [3].

[Accidents and injury](#) (including drowning):

- Stay out of floodwaters, which may contain items hazardous to your health (including electrical power lines which may be live and cause electric shock, moving timber, metal, and broken glass; exposure to venomous and non-venomous animals, snakes and insects may pose a health hazard), don't attempt to drive through floodwaters.
- Chemicals released following a flood [4], can cause serious health problems such as burns and poisoning following direct exposure. Toxic effects and injuries may also result from environmental contamination, fires and explosions.
- Portable generators or camp stoves if used should not be indoors due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning [5].

Infectious diseases including:

- [Leptospirosis](#) may be a risk in areas affected by flooding. The bacteria can be found in contaminated fresh water and wet soil. You should not wade or swim in floodwater, or if this is unavoidable, you should limit time spent in water.
- [Rabies](#) is a risk worldwide. Avoiding animal contact is the best way to prevent animal bite. If you are bitten, scratched, or licked by any animal, wash the area well and seek urgent medical advice.
- [Malaria](#) advice may be updated in flooded affected areas, check the [Country Information pages](#) for the most recent recommendations. [Insect bite precautions](#) are recommended for all. Additionally, if you have an underlying health issue and plan to visit low risk areas, we recommend you seek advice from a health professional.
- Other disease spread by insects include [dengue](#) and [Zika virus](#); take insect precautions day and night.
- Food and water in flooded areas may become contaminated and unsafe for consumption [6]. Pay particular attention to; hand hygiene and safe preparation of available food to reduce your risk of [travellers' diarrhoea](#), keeping utensils and food preparation areas clean,

separate raw and cooked foods, produce contaminated by flood waters should be kept segregated and cook food thoroughly and keep it at safe temperatures. [Typhoid](#), [cholera](#), and [hepatitis A](#) are all acquired by ingestion of contaminated food and water; there are vaccines that help prevent these diseases.

After travel

Travellers who have been in an area affected by flooding should consult their healthcare provider on return to the UK if they have any on-going health concerns or symptoms.

If you develop symptoms like fever, flu-like illness, prolonged or bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pain or a rash, during or after travel, get prompt medical attention. Symptoms of malaria can appear up to a year after travel. If you are taking malaria tablets, remember to complete the course as recommended.

Resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Floods](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Floodwater after a disaster or emergency](#)
- [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. Help and services around the world](#)
- [Imported Fever Service](#)
- [World Health Organization. Global report on drowning](#)
- [Imported Fever Service](#)

REFERENCES

1. [World Health Organization. Floods. \[Accessed 29 November 2022\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization. Weekly Epidemiological Record. 2005;21 January;80\(3\). \[Accessed 29 November 2022\]](#)
3. [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. If you're affected by a crisis abroad. \[Accessed 29 November 2022\]](#)
4. [World Health Organization. Chemical releases caused by natural hazard events and disasters. 22 August 2018. \[Accessed 29 November 2022\]](#)
5. [NHS. Carbon monoxide poisoning. 1 July 2022. \[Accessed 29 November 2022\]](#)
6. [World Health Organization. Food safety tips for flooding. \[Accessed 29 November 2022\]](#)

Published Date: 29 Nov 2022

Updated Date: 29 Nov 2022